

REMARKS

The interview with examiner Danton DeMille on June 20, 2007 is acknowledged with appreciation. The examiner's interview summary is accurate as to what transpired at the interview.

Claims 1-37 and 39-43 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 7, 18, 35, and 36 have been amended herein.

Claims 21-34 and 39-43 are allowed.

Reconsideration of the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 5,567,916 to Napiorkowski et al. ("Napiorkowski") is requested. As discussed at the interview amended independent claim 1 is not anticipated by Napiorkowski for the reasons given below.

Regarding claim 1, Napiorkowski does not disclose or suggest 1) "a flexible belt," 2) "an inflatable bladder coupled to the belt," 3) "a connector for connection between the inflatable bladder and the hose" in combination with "the connector comprising an elastic sheet forming a portion of a wall of the inflatable bladder," 4) "a first slot within the sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt," 5) "the elastic sheet having a generally flat configuration along a plane defined by the belt prior to insertion of the hose through the slot," and 6) the "the elastic sheet being deformable to allow the hose to be inserted through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot." Instead, as shown in Figs. 12-13, Napiorkowski discloses a block of foam 82 that is "bent upon itself into a U-shape" such that "substantially one half of surface 86 (designated 90 in FIG. 13)" of the block 82 engages "substantially an opposite half of surface 86 (designated 92 in FIG. 13)" of the block 82. The foam block 82 is then glued to a curved flange 94 of a network interface device as shown in Fig. 13. Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1 is not anticipated by Napiorkowski, and hence withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) rejection thereof is respectfully requested.

Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 1,952,695 to Webb et al. ("Webb") is requested. It is believed that amended independent claim 1, and dependent claims 2-6, are not anticipated by Webb for the reasons given below.

Regarding claim 1, Webb does not disclose or suggest 1) "a flexible belt," 2) "an inflatable bladder coupled to the belt," 3) "a connector for connection between the inflatable bladder and the hose" in combination with "the connector comprising an elastic sheet forming a portion of a wall of the inflatable bladder," 4) "a first slot within the sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt," 5) "the elastic sheet having a generally flat configuration along a plane defined by the belt prior to insertion of the hose through the slot," and 6) "the elastic sheet being deformable to allow the hose to be inserted through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot." In contrast, as shown in Figs. 1-3, Webb discloses a block 1 of rubber material that is clamped to a dash 7 of a vehicle by a clamp member 9. The block 1 has a plurality of spaced apertures 3 and the material of the block 1 between the apertures 3 is severed, as shown at 4 in Fig. 3, so as to permit the block 1 to spread apart for admitting articles 5, such as conduits, tubes and conductors. Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1, and dependent claims 2-6, are not anticipated by Webb, and hence withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) rejection thereof is respectfully requested.

Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 5,743,884 to Hasson et al. ("Hasson") is requested. It is believed that amended independent claim 1, and dependent claims 2-6, are not anticipated by Hasson for the reasons given below.

Regarding claim 1, Hasson does not disclose or suggest 1) "a flexible belt," 2) "an inflatable bladder coupled to the belt," 3) "a connector for connection between the inflatable bladder and the hose" in combination with "the connector comprising an elastic sheet forming a portion of a wall of the inflatable bladder," 4) "a first slot within the sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt," 5) "the elastic sheet having a generally flat configuration along a plane defined by the belt prior to insertion of the hose through the slot," and 6) "the elastic sheet being deformable to allow the hose to be inserted through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally

perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot.” In contrast, as shown in Figs. 20-21, Hasson discloses a plurality of disc-shaped sealing members 272 stacked in an end fitting (not shown). Each sealing member 272 has a body 274 with an axial through opening 276. Numerous radial slits 278 emanate from the axial center opening 276 to define thin, readily deflectable flaps 280. The sealing member 272 is preferably made from a foam or other sponge-like material with good memory. In use, a medical instrument 180 is inserted through the axial center opening 276 of the sealing members 272 as shown in Fig. 20. Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1, and dependent claims 2-6, are not anticipated by Hasson, and hence withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) rejection thereof is respectfully requested.

Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 2-20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Napiorkowski in view of Hasson is requested. It is believed that claims 2-20 patentably distinguish over Napiorkowski and Hasson for the reasons given below.

Claims 2-6 are dependent upon independent claim 1 which is in condition for allowance for the reasons given above. For example, there is no teaching or suggestion whatsoever in Napiorkowski that any hoses extend through any slots in the disclosed grommets 2, 40, 60, 70, 80 “in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot” as recited in claim 1. Likewise, there is no teaching or suggestion whatsoever in Hasson that any medical instruments 180 extend through any radial slots 278 in the disclosed sealing members 272 “in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot” as recited in claim 1. To the contrary, Hasson explicitly teaches that the instrument 180 of Fig. 20, pass through the axial opening 276 in the sealing members 272 in an axial direction generally perpendicular to the sealing members 272. (See Hasson’s col. 11 lines 9-13.)

Regarding independent claim 7, neither Napiorkowski nor Hasson, either individually or in combination, disclose or suggest 1) “a flexible belt having a generally flat configuration,” 2) “an inflatable bladder coupled to the belt” in combination with “the bladder having a generally flat configuration when deflated,” 3) “a connector for connection between the inflatable bladder and the hose” in combination with “the connector comprising a thermoplastic elastomer sheet,” 4) “a slot within the thermoplastic elastomer sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt,” 5) “the slot” comprising “a slit,”

“holes at ends of the slit,” and “tabs at intersections between the slit and the holes,” 6) “the thermoplastic elastomer sheet having a generally flat configuration along a plane defined by the belt prior to insertion of the hose through the slot,” and 7) “the thermoplastic elastomer sheet being deformable to allow the hose to be inserted through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot.”

Regarding independent claim 18, neither Napiorkowski nor Hasson, either individually or in combination, disclose or suggest 1) “a flexible belt having a generally flat configuration,” 2) “an inflatable bladder coupled to the belt” in combination with “the bladder having a generally flat configuration when deflated,” 3) “a connector for connection between the inflatable bladder and the hose” in combination with “the connector comprising an elastic sheet forming a portion of a wall of the inflatable bladder,” 4) “a first slot within the sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt,” 5) “the elastic sheet having a generally flat configuration along a plane defined by the belt prior to insertion of the hose through the slot,” and 7) “the elastic sheet being deformable to allow the hose to be inserted through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot.”

Accordingly, independent claims 7 and 18, along with claims 8-17 and 19-20 which depend either directly or indirectly from claims 7 and 18, are in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 35-37 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Pat. No. 6,676,614 to Hansen et al. (Hansen) in view of Napiorkowski is requested. It is believed that independent claims 35-36, and dependent claim 37, patentably distinguish over Hansen and Napiorkowski for the reasons given below.

Regarding claim 35, Hansen does not disclose or suggest “a connector for connecting the hose to the inflatable bladder” in combination with “the connector comprising an elastic sheet forming a portion of a wall of the inflatable bladder.” Instead, Hansen discloses a tubular connector or collar 60, not “an elastic sheet forming a portion of a wall of the inflatable bladder.” (See Hansen’s Figs. 1, 4-7, and 9-12.) Further, Hansen does not disclose or suggest “a first slot within the sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt.” Instead, the collar 60 has a circular opening (Fig. 9) that is aligned with

the passage 38 (Fig. 12), not “a ... slot within the sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt.” In addition, Hansen does not disclose or suggest that the hose extend “through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot.”

Further, regarding claim 35, Napiorkowski does not cure the foregoing deficiencies of Hansen. For example, Napiorkowski does not disclose or suggest “a connector for connecting the hose to the inflatable bladder” in combination with “the connector comprising an elastic sheet forming a portion of a wall of the inflatable bladder.” Further, Napiorkowski does not disclose or suggest “a first slot within the sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt.” In addition, Napiorkowski does not disclose or suggest that the hose extend “through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot.”

Regarding claim 36, Hansen does not disclose or suggest “a connector for connecting the hose to the inflatable bladder” in combination with “the connector comprising a thermoplastic elastomer sheet.” Instead, Hansen discloses a tubular connector or collar 60, not “an elastic sheet forming a portion of a wall of the inflatable bladder.” (See Hansen’s Figs. 1, 4-7, and 9-12.) Further, Hansen does not disclose or suggest “a slot within the thermoplastic elastomer sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt.” Instead, the collar 60 has a circular opening (Fig. 9) that is aligned with the passage 38 (Fig. 12), not “a ... slot within the sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt.” In addition, Hansen does not disclose or suggest that the hose extend “through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot.”

Further, regarding claim 36, Napiorkowski does not overcome the foregoing deficiencies of Hansen. For example, Napiorkowski does not disclose or suggest “a connector for connecting the hose to the inflatable bladder” in combination with “the connector comprising a thermoplastic elastomer sheet.” Further, Napiorkowski does not disclose or suggest “a slot within the thermoplastic elastomer sheet that extends in a direction generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the belt.” In addition, Napiorkowski does not disclose or suggest that the hose extend “through the slot in a direction generally parallel to the plane defined by the belt and generally perpendicular to a longitudinal dimension of the slot.”

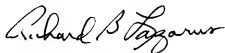
Accordingly, independent claims 35-36, and dependent claim 37, are in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendment and supporting remarks, the subject application is now deemed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that a telephonic interview would expedite the allowance of this application, he is requested to contact the undersigned for a prompt resolution of any outstanding issues.

This amendment is being filed with a request for continued examination as the examiner's interview summary indicates that the changes require further consideration and/or search.

It is respectfully requested that, if necessary to effect a timely response, this paper be considered as a Petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and shortages and other fees be charged, or any overpayment in fees be credited, to the Account of Barnes & Thornburg, Deposit Account No. 10-0435, with reference to file 7175-74151.

Respectfully submitted,
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